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THE HEROES

OF

THE LAST LUSTRE.

A POEM.

John F. Munis.

"THERE WERE GIANTS IN THE EARTH IN THOSE DAYS."

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY DANIEL DANA, JR.

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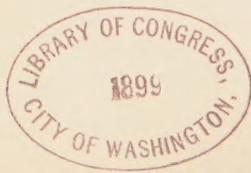
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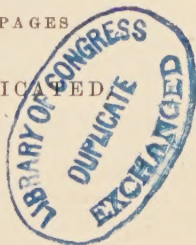
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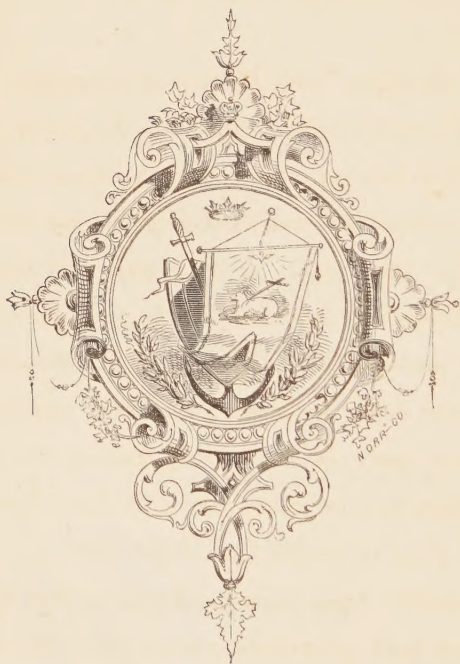


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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER,
A VALIANT SOLDIER OF THE CROSS,
WHO HIMSELF
FELL ON THE FIELD
DURING THIS LAST LUSTRE,
THESE PAGES
ARE DEDICATED





A P O L O G Y.

That the title of this Poem may not appear inappropriate, the author would state that the greater part of it was written two years ago. Causes beyond control have latterly delayed the publication of a song not then intended for the world. If the reader will consider the "Last Lustre" as intended for the years previous to the writing, and not the publication of this volume, he will understand better its motto; and will confess that no five years' space in the world's history has produced more giants in true valor, than this Last Lustre of an age that false reformers term degenerate.

The author hopes to be pardoned in that he has left the beaten path of modern poetry, and, after the spirit of the ancient masters of the art, has chanted, in strains that perhaps lack the sentimentality of the love-song, the noble deeds of HEROES.

P R O E M.

O HEART of Man! one, ever, and the same,
Whatever age, whatever country claim
Thy birth,—for, in the ancient fields of Time,
(So silent now their silence is sublime!)
From sere and falling boughs the fruit depends
In ripened loveliness, the same that bends
The sturdy tree of this the latest age:—

Great Heart of Man! whose honored heritage
Is holy love, God's primal thought which erst
Upon infinity in star-words burst;
Which lit those lamps that with undying ray
Light weary souls upon their heavenward way:
Eternal love, pure and serene, the bow
Spanned from God's throne to his footstool below,
Beaming through all the storms and mists of earth

That cloud the radiance of our heavenly birth,
The certain pledge of peace that is to come,
And in its shadow make on earth her home :

Strong Heart of Man ! that ever hast withstood
Fetter, and chain, and badge of servitude ;
Firm in the right, and fearless in the fray
Wherever Wrong her horrid host array ;
Yet, generous in thy strength, dost mercy show,
And bend, a brother, o'er the fallen foe ;
Dost hang thy banner on the mind's grim walls,
And where the clash of reason's conflict calls,
Shod with eternal love, thy willing feet
Hie swift, on mercy's godlike errand fleet ;
Then up through Heaven's high portals borne afar,
In whispered blessing dies the din of war :

True Heart of Man ! that by a golden thread
Unitest all the living with the dead ;
Unitest all the living in one band,
Who, soul by soul, make up Life's shifting strand
By Time's waves washed, and lost, as even he,
In the thick shadows of Eternity !

Unitest all on earth with all above,
By that one golden ray of godlike love—
Ray that has travelled through the realms of space,
Sphere-like its pathway without trail or trace,
Yet, in the beauty that it wakes on earth,
Reveals to man the secret of its birth;
Awaking here an echo of the song
Whose chorus Heaven's angelic host prolong:—
(Caught by the spheres as ever on they flee,
Loud swells the hymn throughout infinity;
While, as their voices rise in joyous tone,
Shouteth each sun-king from his lurid throne,
Until the anthem, circling through all space,
In human hearts, at last, finds resting place;
That strand, on which the waves of heavenly song,
Dashing the star-bound shores of space along,
And arching Heaven with rainbow-jewelled spray,
In music break, and gently fade away:)

True as the gold by fiery test refined;
Strong as the wind that dwelleth unconfined,

Whether it lull the violet to sleep,
Or rouse to rage the guardians of the deep;
Great as thy home the Universe, and full,
As it with suns, of treasure wonderful—
O brother Heart! A pilgrim for a time,
Life for thy road, but Heaven thy proper clime,
List while I strive to wake a kindred strain,
And touch the chord struck never yet in vain!

I.

I.

BEYOND the Frost-king's marble-pillared den ;
Beyond the farthest haunts of living men ;
Beyond the frozen tracks of deep-fanged bear ;
Beyond the sea-calf's icy-covered lair ;
Far from the circling sweep of Arctic bird ;
Far from the echoes by his swift flight stirred ;
Far from the Northern Light's fleet, sparkling smile,
The brightening moon, and stars' far-splendoring wile ;
Far from the fitful favors of the Day,
And, from the wayward frowns of Night, away ;
(Ambitious Night, who rent her husband's throne,
And girt her murderous heart with diamond zone
In vain,—his golden crown outshines its glare,
And with its splendor awes the yielding air !)
There holds the Sun his everlasting reign,

And laughs in triumph o'er the usurper slain.
The universal air above his head,
The depthless sea beneath his feet outspread;
Silence the mighty viceroy who with sway
Boundless as his, sees earth and sky obey;
Swift at his nod the breezes hold their breath,
Till Echo voiceless yields her unto death.
High on the peak that glitters far away,
The sleepless sunbeam holds a warder's sway,
And, jealous, blinds the curious eyes that dare
The charmed precincts of its golden lair.
In silence throned, upon this silent sea
The sun bends smiling from Infinity!

No earthly keel has ploughed this virgin deep;
No wave has seen the stealthy shadow creep
Upon its breast, of mast, or sail, or shroud,
Nor rippling crest to mortal prow has bowed.
No human ken has conned its riches o'er,
Or traced the wanderings of its devious shore;
A mortal eye has seen, mayhap, afar,

Its distant waters twinkling like a star:—
The Indian of the snow-encircled coast
Has stood and gazed, in childish wonder lost,
Or tried in vain, to scan with practised eye
The limits of its wide immensity;
He never dared upon its breast to float
The precious treasure of his fragile boat—
He feared the tempest's furious breath would sweep
His tiny vessel from the cradling deep;
Or golden spear, or bolt of deadly fire,
Transfix the victim of a sun-king's ire.

What spirits revel there, I cannot tell:
Perchance the breath of rising breeze may swell
Their tiny sails, who weave with nimble hand
The frosty veil that decks the Autumnal land;
Or those fair sprites who in their bosom hold
The snowy plumes that grace the wintry wold,
Frolic on fairy foot from wave to wave,
And in its foam their pallid beauty lave,
Hasting to sow broadcast o'er earth's rich fields

The snowy seed that foaming torrents yields!
When high commission from their king they bear,
Perhaps they shake upon the slumbering air
The keys that lock the brook—and rivers close—
And chain the mountain in his robe of snows;
Until the frightened breeze, awaked from sleep,
Flies, still increasing, o'er the boiling deep,
Freighted with dreams of direst ocean storms,
And death drawn fearful in a thousand forms.
The tiny servants of the great Frost-king
Across its depths their silent courses wing;
They bear the vials of their master's wrath
To pour upon the summer's golden path—
Blood-red the trail where pass their trusty feet,
And fallen leaves their vengeful footsteps greet;
The bald tree bends before their icy breath,
And leaf and flower yield trembling unto death:
But pure and gentle as a seraph's prayer,
Borne like a feather through the nursing air,
Hastes o'er the wave the winter's parting breath,
To tint the verdure of the earth's spring wreath.

Some dream, upon the confines where the stars
First break the despot Day-god's golden bars,
The joyful orbs keep echo of the strain
That ushered in their calm and holy reign,
When, at Creation's birth, God's creatures sang
Till Heaven and Hell with their wild praises rang:
Oh! does there swell across this unknown sea
The music of such heavenly harmony?
Perhaps the angel ministers who light
The glowing fires that lamp our gloomy night,
Across its waters trail their glittering train,
To fill their censers in the sunbeams' fane—
While Ocean treasures in his world-wide heart
These gorgeous scenes that o'er his mirror dart.

What glories rare have passed before its gaze
And filled its pulsing bosom with amaze;
What angel footsteps gambol o'er its waves;
What magic skiff its tranquil water laves;
What heavenly eyes have drooped upon its breast,
And by its murmur soothed, have closed to rest;

What silver wing has skimmed this maiden deep,
Or met its tiny crestcaps' frolic leap ;
What unseen monsters in its caverns play,
Or through its waters cleave their sparkling way ;
What living motes upon the sunbeams ride,
And dip their beauty in the laughing tide ;
What birds are wearied by the yoke of gold
The sunrays o'er their shining feathers hold ;
What glittering messengers as guardians stand,
To hold the stars within a golden band—
Or in the corners of high heaven keep
Their ceaseless watch upon the azure steep,
And far outstretched, with skilful hands that bear
The yellow curtain of the noonday air—
I cannot tell ; for never mortal sail
Has crossed its waves to bring the wondrous tale.

That virgin sea is meet to bear thy name,
O FRANKLIN, noble martyr-child of Fame—
Deep as thy heart its soundless waters are,
Like thy pure life no earthly taint they bear !

Or scarce less honored, thine, intrepid KANE,
Meet dweller in the same Immortal Fane !
When fell Fame's tears upon his honored grave,
Earth to her love thy manly courage gave—
Than him ne'er mother wept a nobler son,
Or gained so soon, in thee, as dear an one !
Let Faith, and Hope, and patient Love receive
The crown that Earth is generous yet to give.

II.

SLOWLY, slowly as a cloud
Creeping up the field of blue,
Hold we now our trailless path
Seas and icy deserts through :
In a snowy vestment swathed,
Shrouded as the white-robed hills,
Flitting ghost-like through the deep
Wheresoe'er the current wills,
Seem we still more grim and ghastly
Than the giant bergs that speed
On their silent mission by us,
Nor our pigmy vessels heed.

The sun in rising splendor
Glancing proudly o'er the scene,
Bathes the pyramid gigantic
In a purple, glowing sheen ;

Lights the shapely marbled tower
 Into festive brilliancy,
And with rainbow-fingered hand
 Decks the clouds resplendently ;
Not half such gorgeous beauty
 Steals upon the enchanted brain
Of the wildered Eastern dreamer
 Sunk beneath the drug's wild reign !

Now the distant starry choir
 Chant the tired Earth's evensong,
As in gold and purple raiment
 Through the paths of space they throng.
Lo ! the North Light's fiery footsteps
 Spangle all the dusky arch,
On the waiting, bending sky
 Hanging jewels in its march ;
As a Heaven-reaching ladder
 With angelic faces bright,
It bridges with its glories
 The deep darkness of the night.

Girt with splendors yet we dream
Of the homes we left behind;
In each far-off hearthstone still
Are our hopes and love enshrined.
Still the ruddy hand of Morn
Hasting from the distant shore
Where our hearts are centred, brings
Fairest flowers from Memory's store—
Still the peaceful, nun-like Even
Comes with prayers and blessings bright,
Learned from dearest lips outpouring
All their heart to silent Night!

Years have mouldered in their tomb,
Since, like clouds at set of sun,
We watched them melt in darkness,
Snow-white cliffs of Albion!
We miss the golden flashing
Of the slender, summer grain,
And the fairy-fingered flowers
Staining all the grassy plain:

And we miss the merry voices,
And the fireside's homely cheer,
Loving looks, and words of—Hush!
For I feel the coward tear.

Courage! courage! gallant comrades!
Night will pass, though dark and dreary,
And the day will bring the sunshine
To the fainting heart and weary.
Think no more of home and pleasure,—
Drive these misty damps away—
Sun-like, let our full-orbed purpose
Bring again the perfect day!
Onward, onward is the watchword—
Hearts are stout, and brave, and true—
Never sighing or repining,
It is ours to live, and do!

We are passing through a temple
Made by God's own viewless hand—
Far more glorious this than any

Builded shrines on earth that stand :
He upheaved these icy columns,
And He smoothed yon snowy nave,
And the Sun, for aye His servant—
For His worship here, He gave !
His own faithful arm, remember,
Is about our lonely path,
Whether earthly or celestial
Is the home for us He hath !

Cheering thus their drooping hearts, with courageous
glance and song,
These lion-hearted heroes through the ocean wandered
long—
Wandered far o'er pathless coast through the icy-
channeled sea,
Where the Frost-king on his throne holds unceasing
jubilee !
Not the golden fleece they sought, but a silver shroud
they found,

That in snowy bands the ship and the stiffened sailor
bound—

Bound their heart in icy grasp—locked their hand in
frozen chain—

Glazed the piercing, merry eye—held in death the
busy brain.

Tell me, O thou Wind, that murmuredst o'er their
sleep a lullaby,

Where is noble FRANKLIN sleeping, with his gallant
company?

Didst thou catch their dying sigh—didst thou watch
the soul depart?

And bearest thou their blessings in thy world-em-
bracing heart?

Or murmuring deceitful, didst thou lull them with
sweet sound,

Till around their frozen corpses thy treacherous arms
were wound?

Wert thou the snow-storm's charger, heading in thy
rapid flight

Myriad ghostly columns sweeping on in overwhelm-
ing might

Till they crushed the feeble ship—while thy dreadful
chorus swept,

In a hellish hymn of triumph, o'er the white tomb
where they slept?

Last eve in dreams I saw them! I was standing in
the night—

There was darkness at my feet, and above I saw no
light:

Moon and stars had hid their faces in a dank, mist-
fingered hand—

And the earth shrank from the clouds—and the mists
frowned on the land.

Long I gazed with earnest glance, till there seemed
a frozen coast

Dimly rising from the waves which were frozen as
they tossed—

Frozen, frozen, all was frozen, till the very air it
seemed

To be freezing all my veins and my heart-strings
while I dreamed !

There they stood, those brave twin sisters, stricken in
their race with death !

In mockery about them he had hung a snowy
wreath.

Half across the glassy decks of the ships one wave
was hurled,

Which had crystallised as it flew ; and the little rip-
ples curled

Still around the frozen prow, but their liveliness was
gone :

The sails seemed cut of marble, and the ropes were
carved of stone !

There they stood, twin marble fanes, carved by view-
less artist hand,

Built for worshippers unseen on the distant lonely
strand :

Or as if a bridal pair, in a garb of white arrayed,
The iceberg was their altar, and the wind a pæan
played !

Swing the glassy door in silence on its rusty iron
hinge;

How it glitters in the darkness, the sparkling frosty
fringe!

O God! what ghastly faces, with a fixed and stony
gaze,

Are staring into mine with the look that never
strays!

As if some quaint old sculptor, in crazed or morbid
mood,

Had bent the stubborn marble into lifelike atti-
tude,

The crew around were clustered in that charnel-house
of death,—

Promethean statues, waiting only for the quickening
breath!

Oh, that fearful, fearful dream! let me drive it from
my sight—

For still its steps pursue me through the shadows of
the night.

Then I wandered in my dreams ; and a spirit led me
where

The purple Arctic sunlight spread its glory through
the air.

I saw a little graveyard, crouched beneath a moun-
tain's side,

Where the wind that swept the plain in a gentle
murmur died ;

And the sun had crowned so splendidly the grave-
yard's clustered host,

That I fancied them an angel-band, on earth in slum-
ber lost ;

Their white wings folded peacefully above each gen-
tle breast,

While a golden coronet there seemed on each fair
brow to rest.

Was this their peaceful death-couch—or was theirs a
fearful end ?

Alas ! nor earth, nor sea, nor sky, an answering sign
may send.

But one true heart still watches by England's distant
shore,

And listens for the footsteps she will greet, oh! never-
ermore!

Though hopes have faded one by one from every
manly breast,

Or, stranded on Despair's dim shore, have sunk for
aye to rest—

Yet love burns high within her soul, and prompts the
trustful prayer,

That still some strong arm stretched from Heaven the
good ship home may bear.

It casts its holy splendor far upon his wandering
path,

The torch-fire of her woman's love, the beacon of her
faith!

O sunlight heart of woman, ever radiant, ever bright,
Though the clouds from earth's dull hearth strive to
hide thy glowing light,

Yet we know that far above them thou hast thine
eternal throne,

And dost compass earth and clouds with thy beam-
ing, sunny zone!

Take comfort, noble woman; though thy Franklin has
no tomb

Where love unsympathizing flies the marble's chilling
gloom,

He has made his grave for aye in the nations' world-
wide heart,

And while it beats, his memory from earth will ne'er
depart.

Oh, better far the life upon his country's altar laid,
And better far the high command of duty well
obeyed,

Than the life of slothful ease, and the hours of dull
repose,

That like cloudless days of summer in weary languor
close.

Around his glowing sunset gathered clouds of bright-
est hue,

Till the Night-queen reigned her steeds the glorious
sight to view!

Still where his sun at noonday disappeared from
earthly sight,

Hearts are clustered thick as stars mourning his un-
timely flight ;

Still gorgeous clouds of triumph are decking all the
sky,

And thunder-tones of praises roll a regal symphony.

III.

Lost, oh lost!

Heard you the busy breeze

Whisper the listening trees,

Till sighing in accord

They caught the dreadful word,

While high their bleak arms tossed?

Lost, oh lost!

Lost, oh lost!

The bursting ocean wave

A voice to sorrow gave,

And as its foaming crest

Sank on the sea's deep breast,

Muttered the sad accost—

Lost, oh lost!

Lost, oh lost!

A stout and valiant soul,

A manly heart and whole,
Duty's true soldiers they—
The swiftest to obey,
Though death their straight path crossed—
Lost, oh lost!

Lost, oh lost!
A true and steadfast man,
First in the world's great van;
Whose name without a spot
No more for aye forgot,
Will be his country's boast.
Lost, oh lost!

Lost, oh lost!
Proclaim it, royal wind,
King of the unconfined!
The mountain pathways scale,—
Breathe in the rustic vale,—
The faithful at his post,
Lost, oh lost!

Lost, oh lost !
A woman's loving voice,
Mute at the step of joys,
Pleads through rebellious tears,—
Still looking from her fears
For him she loves the most :
Lost, oh lost !

Lost, oh lost !
Will never kindly heart
Upon the mission start ?
Oh, prayer shall fill his sail,
And calm the hostile gale,
And save him tempest-tossed.
Lost, oh lost !

Earth's heart aroused it at the pleading prayer—
Shook off its gilded trappings, and laid bare
The inborn riches in its soundless deep
Far from the daylight's common glare that sleep :
Heart vied with heart, and hand with eager hand,

Each to be foremost in the generous band.
True souls shook off the sloth of selfish dreams,
And ope'd their fountains to the sunlight's beams,—
Founts that beneath the ice of self reposed,
Or in their youth the stony world had closed.

America! then were thy heart-strings swept
By the sad wail that o'er Atlantic crept!
Thus, stealing o'er the slight Æolian string,
The breeze but brushed it with a stealthy wing,
Yet not too light to wake the tuneful throng
Lurking within its breast, of matchless song—
And louder, sweeter swells the full-choired gale
Answered, responsive, from the mount and vale:
But purer, less of earth and more of Heaven,
That burst of grief for missing Franklin given;
One holds entranced, mayhap, a listening world—
To hear the other, angel wings were furled.

Then Commerce threw aside her golden mask,
And Mammon bent him to the unwonted task;

Then to our dimmed and narrowed sight was given
The nearest glimpse that earth may have of Heaven.
O God! it was a splendid sight to see
Such spark of Heaven in dull humanity!

As from the ramparts of their city spring
An angel twain, and cleave with snowy wing
The azure waves that break in light upon
The sapphire shore of every distant sun—
With gladness fired they from their Master's throne
Bear life to breathe upon some far-off zone:
So from the shelter of our western world
Two little barks their snowy sails unfurled,
And on their joyous path of mercy sped,
A brother's love o'er brothers' hearts to shed.
We saw their white wings, wafting them afar,
Set in the ocean like a tiny star;
Two nations' hopes were shining in its ray,
Two nations' prayers pressed on its gleaming way—
Oh, may that orb upon our lost ones rise,
And gladden with its beams their yearning eyes!

The sun bends lingering, with golden smile,
O'er three rough graves that furrow Beechy Isle;
The wrinkled cliff hangs half-protecting o'er
These silent dwellers on a stranger shore,
And gazing down his brow more kindly seems,
And lights with love beneath the sunset beams.
"Sacred," the humble words of sorrow tell,
"To those who served their God and country well."
This the sole record that the chill earth gave—
Alas! no word was given from the wave.

Yet not alone—oh, sadder far to see
The relics of their lonely misery :
The tale of hardship written there they found
On mound and ruin—graven all around.
The garden—but no fruit or flower within ;
The hearth, forsaken, told what they had seen,—
The scanty meal—the chilled and starving crew—
Our direst dream of woe, alas! made true.
But where were they, the missing martyr-band?
Fled to the chill embraces of the land

Whose virgin bosom, white with dazzling snows,
Allures the wanderer to his last repose !
Upon its mother's frozen, marble breast,
The heart it covered sunk at last to rest,
Her infant hangs, and strives with piteous moan
To draw some nurture from its orb of stone :
Poor babe ! alas, that ever mother's breast
Should for her young provide so chill a nest !
Thus beautiful and cold, and drear and bare,
Earth spreads her bosom to the Arctic air,
And offers nothing but a dream and death
To those who first in her fond arms drew breath :
So close her arms around the true and brave
Who follow Duty but to find a grave.

IV.

OH! Hope is like a star!
That sends its rays afar
Through the dank mists and night's blackness
streaming;
And fainting hearts of earth
At its distant, twinkling birth
In gladness lift them up to its beaming.

Oh! Hope is like the moon!
Night's best and richest boon,
O'er the earth soft and silver raiment throwing;
When she lifts her white-plumed crest
From her dim and dingy nest,
'Neath her wings mark all things in beauty growing.

Oh! Hope is like the sun!
When his march has begun,
How the earth fills with mirth at his greeting!

And the little starry fear
That has dared his head uprear,
At the glance of his lance flies the meeting!

Months passed—yet Hope on Fancy's wing
Explored the earth, the sea and air,
And Love wherever Hope could cling
Would fly to build her fond dreams there.

Days brought no tidings of the lost—
The lost, the loved, oh where were they?
Weeks from the lap of Time were tossed,
And floated silently away;

And now Despair with stealthy tread
Entered each heart's half-opened door,
But Love on jealous pinion sped,
Closed it, and sat, as guard, before.

Down from the North with shriek and cry
The wild wind poured his sweeping horde;
We listened as his train passed by,
We could not catch nor sign nor word.

We sought the graving quaint, the frost

On lawn and leaf, and lakelet leaves,
And all (to day and sunlight lost)
The mystic scrolls the snow-sprite weaves:
The white-winged winter-angels flew
O'er Summer's desolated hearth,
And gently as a mother drew
Their coverlet o'er naked earth;
Far o'er the land their white host roved,
But ghostlike fled at Spring's first breath,
And left no message from our loved—
Our loved who kept their watch with death!

A small, but noble-hearted band,
For dreary days, and drearier miles,
They travelled through the northern land,
Across the hard and barren strand
The sun but greets with summer smiles.
Their tent was curtained with the snow;
Their guide the glittering, cold North-star;
For drink they bade the snow-heap flow;
Their food—they brought it from afar,

For on these plains no herb can grow ;
Yet kept they trustful heart, and stout ;
The fire within—that ne'er burned out.

The storm stretched out his hand,
And dreadful was his form,
The angry, howling storm,
And with a frosty curtain hid the land,
The raging, sweeping storm !

The storm brought forth his steed,
From his pasture unconfined
The strong and cruel wind,
And lashed him panting to his fiercest speed,
The swift and treacherous wind !

The storm arrayed his host,
The keen-lanced hail and snow,
The myriad, whelming snow,
And with his ghostly army swept the coast,
Of hail and wingéd snow !

The snow, the merry snow,
 'Twas a gentle strain it played ;
It came with timid step and slow,
 Like the feet of a blushing maid ;
And it fell and sank in its earthy cup,
And the thirsty earth-clods drank it up !
 The merry snow !

The snow, the merry snow,
 'Twas a strange, wild strain it played ;
The lithe flakes staggered to and fro
 Like Bacchanals on a raid ;
Then they made on the ground a downy nest,
And sank in sleep on each other's breast !
 The merry snow !

The snow, the merry snow,
 'Twas a terrible strain it played ;
Down and on marched its white-plumed row
 And swept with its host the glade ;
Its banner was hung upon every tree,

And the white hills tented its soldiery !

The merry snow !

The snow, the merry snow,

It ceased its varied strain,

And bade the wearied wanderers go,

And their loved and lost regain ;

It curtained their tent, and gave them drink,

And smoothed their path to the ocean's brink !

The merry snow !

They reached at last a distant coast :

And here, by some strange fortune tossed,

In misery and famine bound,

With snow and silence all around,

An Indian settlement they found.

The Indians, when they spied the face

Of white man, drew them in their tent,

And aid and kindly succor lent ;

And soon unfolded to their gaze

Their treasures—relics of our lost,

The lost and loved, the true and brave,
Who far away had found a grave,
 Thrown starving on this savage coast.

By their low huts, oh joy! they found—
Alas! it was a funeral mound.

Their fate they sought by signs to know;
 And from their uncouth gestures crept
Such sense of suffering and woe
 That e'en the stoutest sailor wept.
These told how in the iceberg's grip,
Shattered, had sunk their noble ship;
How famine shrank each manly cheek,
And bowed the strong, and crushed the weak;
How nobly clung they side by side,
And held them up against the tide—
But how at last, they drooped and died.

They sought if any there could tell
In words what signs had limned full well:

Then thus an Indian woman spoke—
Yet sometimes rising grief would choke,
And tears adown her swarthy face
In rapid flight would wildly chase,
As down the dusky cheek of Night
The falling stars hold glittering flight :

“ ’Twas here, upon this little isle—
In winter-time a dreary pile
Of wall and tower of sea-tossed ice,
Fit for a Norseman’s paradise ;
But now by rays of midnight sun
To some rude look of beauty won—
Here landed in the stormy night,
Three winters since, (if I count right
The suns since then that set and rose
Upon this wilderness of snows,)
A little, haggard, pilgrim band,
Seeking the shelter of the strand
To die—for they were pale and bowed,
And fragile as the noonday cloud :

White as the mummied hills around,
In swathing snow-shroud ever bound,
Standing in this great crypt of Time
Sameness and silence make sublime!
Or like the Ice-king's frozen breath,
When, dreaming on his fleecy heath,
Creatures of thin and flimsy mould
To ghastly life by it are foaled.
We thought them drifting clouds of snow,
As sometimes sudden whirlwinds blow
The curling sleet, until the coasts
Seem stormed and sieged by armed ghosts:
So pale and gaunt and shadowy they,
They seemed the dreams of men made clay!

“Here crouched beneath this little hill,
Their snow-huts; by this frozen rill
They placed their only boat—alas!
They knew not it would never pass
The buoyant wave again, but rot
Upon this shore, with them, forgot;

Here is the only fragment, see !

A shadow of its bravery.

Here was their home—there is their grave—
Where watch and ward keep wind and wave.

“I pass the fearful winter by ;
The cold that glazed the living eye ;
The famine that with maddening hand
Clutched at the heart-strings of their band ;
(We sometimes brought them food, but we
Could share with them but poverty ;)
The storm that urged his furious host
Sudden and swift along the coast,
And with his sword the wind, that rent
The icy curtains of their tent ;
The home mementos, one by one,
To feed the flame that warmed them, gone ;
The Death that furled his pallid wing
And sat upon their hearthstones, king !
To whom they daily bent the knee
And owned his fearful sovereignty.

Yet, morn and eve, we oft could hear
The full hymn rising sweet and clear;
 High o'er the tempest's shriek it rose—
 It dirged the twilight's peaceful close,
 When (for an angel's voice they heard)
 The listening echoes never stirred.

“The Midnight Sun rose shining now
Upon their graves' long, peaceful row,
Where side by side they calmly slept,
While tearful watch the living kept.

 The living! oh, more dead were they!
 Pale as the twilight ghost of day,
 Gaunt, ghastly forms of pulsing clay:
Day after day they drooped and died,
And Life and Death dwelt side by side.
One still survived: I saw him stand
Alone upon the mocking strand,
And stretch his hands towards the sea,
And call and sigh most mournfully.
He was the largest of them all,

Of strongest frame and gaunt and tall ;
Only such strength as his could bear
The breathing of our frozen air ;

Yet he was wasting day by day,
As mists at sunrise fade away,
Pierced by the sunbeam's fiery ray.

Alone he lived—if living be
To share a couch with misery ;
Nor yet alone—starvation kept
His watch above him while he slept,
And eked him, when awake, a scrap
Torn from the frozen ocean's lap :

His drink was of the melted snow—
'Twas all around, above, below !

“I daily saw him bending o'er
A little spot up from the shore,
Where first the sunbeams sought the ground.
I wondered oft what he had found,
Some little plant or northern flower
In sunny nook that makes its bower ;

Or little creature of the earth :

I knew that it had given birth
To some strange thoughts of sad unrest
Within the lonely stranger's breast ;
For I had marked him dash, one day,
The tear-drops from his cheek away,
As fast they fell, while he bent o'er
His shrined treasure on the shore.

“ One morn I took a dish of food,
And softly stepping by him stood
Before he heard, then proffered held
What once his starving pride repelled.

A moment gazing, then he took
The gift with tearful, thankful look,
That carried blessings, and he strove
By wistful eye his thanks to prove.
If you have marked the Northern Light,
Hasting to crown the waiting night,
Fade soft into the tender ray
That makes night lovelier than the day,

So seemed his face while fitful smile
Lit up its saddened look the while.
It must have been, in that sad dearth
Of any kindly thing of earth,
Some comfort once again to hear
A human voice, though to his ear
The accents were uncouth and rude,
That broke his utter solitude ;
And once again to meet an eye
Upraised to his in sympathy.

“I often came. We sat, we two,
Though neither’s words the other knew,
And smiled and talked by sign and look,
Each other’s faces our best book :
Yet I would learn ; and soon I knew
Enough to gain his story’s clue.
He told me of his English home,
The dear spot he had journeyed from,
That nevermore again should know
His footstep ; and the fireside glow,

The beacon lighted all in vain
For one 'twill never greet again.
The eyes—oh, brighter far, he said—
Whose tears flowed over him as dead ;
The while fond Love outwatched Despair,
And cried, at every step, 'He's there.'
He told how rainbows bent them down
Upon the sward ; and golden crown
Of grain upon the hillside shone,
And girt the land with sunny zone.
I asked if he feared not the while
He stayed caged in this little isle,
Some foe would smite his distant home
Until its hearth-fires sank in gloom :
Then up he looked, and with a smile
(It made my heart beat high the while)
He spread his hands abroad in air,
'Woman, my God is everywhere.'

"We in our simple legends tell
Of angels wont with man to dwell,

Till frightened at a brother's blood
Poured out to calm some hellish mood,
On glittering wing afar they fled:
And then this pall of ice o'erspread
The fated land, which once had shone
In rival richness with the sun.
Afar they fled; their wings they furled
Far from the clamors of the world;
Yet in the night you still can see
Their tent-fires shining distantly.
That cloud above—a mist it seems;
With myriad angel forms it teems,
Clustered so close, each angel face
Sinks in another's pure embrace.

Again they'll come (so runs our lore),
And crown with loveliness this shore.
I thought when first he spake, that he
Was of this angel company;
And half I feared, and looked in awe:
But he, when such a look he saw,
Would speak of God, and of his love,

The Saviour-God for man who strove;
Until at morn and eve I knelt
To yield to God the love I felt.

“He took me to the little spot
Of which I told—a tiny plot
Of barren ground; yet in his eyes
In all the North no lovelier prize:
For here, thrown out by heedless hand,
Or sown in hope on that bleak strand,
A seed, by kindly sunbeam reared,
Peeped timidly, as if it feared
In this strange clime the northern wind
A shroud of snow would 'round it bind.
A slender stick (hewn from a boat
Never again on wave to float)
Supported it; while fast it hung,
And with its tendrils closely clung:
One sweet white flower was half outspread,
Scenting the breeze that by it fled;—
Its pure white face, its dress of green,

The fairest picture ever seen.

Daily it throve, and filled the air

With wondrous songs of sweetness rare.

“He loved it as a little child,

That stout old sailor; it beguiled

The dreary hours of lonely thought,

And home-scenes to his memory brought.

I knew his life was wrapt in it;

Oft have I watched him, musing, sit

And smile as if the flower had thrown

Its arms about him, and had grown

Into his heart, and blooming there,

With sweetest fragrance filled the air.

So close to his lone heart it clung,

Such home-born sweets around it flung,

I knew that should it droop and die,

With its frail life his life would fly.

“I looked—I could no longer see;

The burning tears were blinding me.

Then down I sat upon the sands,
And hid my face within my hands,
Till I could some control regain.
A moment—I looked up again—
And as the glancing sunlight shone
His richly yellow locks upon,
He seemed as oftentimes he told
How martyrs shone in crowns of gold.
But well I marked his cheek had paled,
And death-lines o'er his face had trailed
And left their footprints on his brow.
So ghastly thin had he grown now,
Pallid and gaunt, he seemed to be
More ghost than of mortality.
I knew Death's seal; and more I wept;
And closer to his side I crept,
And took his hand, and tried to prove,
If homeless, he had still found love.

“’Twas summer-time: but whether morn,
Or eve, or midday, or night's dawn,

I could not tell. The Midnight Sun
His long, long course had nearly run :
And now he rested on the peak
Of yon great iceberg grimly bleak,
But over which he then had thrown
His loosened garments' fiery zone,
Until it, gorgeous, seemed to be
A palace lit for revelry ;
And gazing up, the humbler hills
In wonder stared, as growing rills
Of splendor poured adown their side
And swept the land with molten tide.
There he, upon its battlement
In golden splendor idly leant ;
Gazing upon his boundless sway,
On every side stretched far away ;
Or dreaming of the dead, perchance,
Who'd sought a grave in his loved haunts :
And then his glance fell soft and long
Upon the graveyard's little throng,

As loath to leave to dreary night
The spot his love so long made bright.

“I know not why, but I felt awed :
The icy desert seemed so broad ;
The pale-browed mountains frowned on me,
It seemed in tenfold majesty ;
And ocean kept his deep-green eye
Glittering upon me wistfully,
As coiled in many a wavy fold
Against the slimy cliff and cold,
He hid his tongue of hissing spray
And slumbered watchful for his prey.
The wind was hushed ; the breeze had died ;
My very breathing terrified ;
As lightly gliding from my tent,
Forth on my wonted way I went.

“O God ! the flower was crushed and dead !
Afar its pure young life had fled—
The flower ! I scarcely paused to see

Its white cheek sullied ruthlessly.
I saw but *it* ! It was not *he*,
That clod of pale mortality !
With iron stride the death had come,
And smote the vigor with the bloom !
Spared not the flower, and bowed the tree,
And stole its heavenly livery !
A smile was there—the soul had fled—
And left me lonely with my dead.

“The sun upraised his golden spear,
And, fleeing from the dreadful sight,
Threw back his shield of blackest night

Upon the desert white and drear :—
And where his spear-head touched the sky,
One single star shone mournfully—
We were alone, the star and I.”

II.

Sorrowful stars, so sadly o'er me bending,

What measures do ye sing?

Where have your silent steps through space been
wending—

What message do ye bring?

What fearful deeds freight now your pallid lips,

Of faithless love, or life's death-hid eclipse,

Or joy gone sorrowing?

We've wandered far o'er earth's dark places shining

With loving, brightening glance;

In our deep hearts her deeds of glory shrining—

And in her hero haunts,

Oh! feats of prowess have we witnessed there,

Which Fame forever on her tongue shall bear

The listening world to trance.

Beautiful stars, through yon blue ocean gleaming ;
The angels' burnished shells !
Your snow-white breasts with heavenly echoes teeming,
What strain now earthward swells ?
Does Valor on the field of strife lie dead,
Or Fame uphold the dying hero's head,
His loss while Freedom knells ?

We marked the field of death and fiercest warring,
Where, numberless as we,
The gory dead the flowery mead lay marring—
Sleeping all peacefully
The hero host lay facing still the foe,
Still grasped the sword, still bent the desperate brow,
Still glowered fearfully.

Glorious stars, in yon great temple swinging,
The seraphs' rich-voiced bells !
Touched by their hands a flood of love far flinging,
That busy earth compels
To list its melody—what hero names,

The world's no longer, but forever Fame's,
Are these your sweet chime tells?

Count thou our host! As many braves are sleeping
On far Crimean plain—
As many hero souls sad hearts are weeping,
Not here to greet again!
But bright as we their names shall shine for aye,
They shall outlast, with us, earth's little day
And Time's brief, glow-worm reign!

Crashing through the rocky vale
Came the cannon's dreadful hail,
While its wings of thunder made
Earth, and sea, and sky afraid

At that first cry of war!
Then a thousand voices rent
O'er the field the sunlight's tent,
And spread the chorus far.
Now, rank on rank, their glittering fold
On the trembling plain unrolled,

Till the barren autumn wold
Blazed with gleaming steel and gold,
Plumes and martial bravery :
Red and blue their banners' sheen
Shone the bristling ranks between,
Of Gaul and Albion's soldiery !

On the rugged mountain height,
Dense and grey by morning light,
Long a heavy mist had slept :
Now adown the slope it crept,
Steady as a torrent, flowing,
Darker, deeper, denser growing,
Far and wide its grey arms throwing—
Till its cheek the sunbeam kissed ;
Then the dark and silent mist
Gleamed with serried bayonets' glance,
Shone with Cossack's glittering lance,
Blazed with helm, and sword, and spear,
Rang with orders shrill and clear,
Pealed with drum's inspiring clang,

With the trumpet's war-notes rang—
Finding echoes in the glen
And the valiant hearts of men!

“The Russ!” They come, a gleaming wave
Of warriors stout, and true, and brave—

And down the hill it sweeps!

“They fly!” the coward Moslem fly!

The crescent droops ingloriously

Above their murdered heaps!

Onward through the smoke and din

Still their way the Russians win:

As a wave of ocean,

In its whirling motion,

Hurls stone and shell

On the waiting coast,

Where its threatening swell

Is broken and lost,

So ball and shell, a fearful tide,

Scatter destruction far and wide,

From their ranks, glancing,

Onward advancing!

Now, Campbell! on your Highland rock
Receive and break the tempest's shock!

Nearer—mother, pray,

For your son this day!

As lightning from the heavens sent,
That flash of deadly fire has rent

Their bannered host:

And, like a ship by tempest riven,
That host about the field is driven,

In direst tumult tost!

Ha! Scarlett rides before his ranks!

They sent the strife afar,

Those glorious steeds of war,

And hoof resounds, and sabre clanks.

Now Scot, and Erin's son,

To-day your heart is one,

Onward for Albion!

It breaks! the Russian squadron breaks!

For a brief moment quivers—shakes—

Then through their chaff strewn far and wide
The British cohorts grimly ride,
And turn and look them for the foe:
Gone—as when winter whirlwinds blow!

Brave Nolan! with the dead
Thy tearful comrades found
The corpse whose life had fled
Forth from the proud breast-wound:
Peaceful thy rest,
Bravest and best!
Quick o'er the field he spurred
And brought the waited word:
“On! Light Brigade! On! on!” he cried,
And drew his sabre by their side
To join them in that wild death-ride.
Onward, each gallant heart replied;
Here let the brave
Find victor's grave.
O God! they ride to death!
Hushed was each hero's breath,

As onward they sped
To enlist with the dead.
Like a cloud of crimson hue
In the sunset's lap that grew,
Crimson flecked with white and gold,
Sped they o'er the trembling wold!
Proudly glancing in the sun,
How each burnished sabre shone!
As a gaping, deep-mouthed cave
Waits to gulf the crested wave,
That the merry sunbeams lave,
So the hollow Russian square
 Waits the brave
 In its lair.
Right, and left, and front, they flashed!
Through their ranks the iron crashed,
 Deadly as the breath of Hell!
 Brave six hundred,
 When they thundered,
Rang your funeral knell.

But Cardigan was there !
Bright flashed his sabre in the air—
The remnant closed upon his rear
And onward sped with shout and cheer,
Not theirs the thought of fear.
Past the guns like flames they swept,
At each blow a mother wept;
Every comrade's soul that day
Met a foeman's on its way.
Sheathed at last the dripping sword,
O'er the field of death they spurred;
Sadly back their course they bore,
Black with smoke and red with gore.

That morn six hundred warriors rode
Across the field of death and blood—
Two hundred wounded troopers drew
The rein when fell the evening dew.

Thus was Balaklava's name
Written in the Book of Fame.

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Angelic stars! ye souls of Poets pining
 In chains of liquid flame,
Until, grown pure, within some heart enshrining,
 Earth shall resound your fame :
Does any hero-hymn from earth arise,
Or any herald of the silent skies
 A deed for song proclaim ?

Hush ! hear you from the orphaned earth arising,
 As summer day's last sigh,
A low, sweet strain of sorrow, sympathizing
 With the o'erflowing eye ?
Oh weep ! And in the boundless heaven of love,
Each glittering tear unto thy soul shall prove
 A star that ne'er will die.

Mysterious stars, through dusky cavern flitting,
 The ancient myth-writ leaves,
That Night, the Sibyl, in her dark fane sitting,
 To suppliant mortal gives—

Read me your tale of high and manly worth,
That like the spring-flower in its very birth
The waiting hill bereaves.

Now Spring, with a bright smile diademed,
And her fresh young cheeks with tear-drops gemmed,
Weeping the wrecks of the winter's strife,
And smiling the tender buds to life,
Had peeped but once on the barren plain,
And sobbed a deluge of tender rain—
Then hid in her frosty bed again.
Oh, dismal it was within the wood,
Whose sons, awaiting her coming, stood
With arms o'erloaded with branches green,
(Beneath their brown coats springing unseen,)
And summer jewels of jasper sheen
* Saved from the whirlwind's searching wrath,
Ready to strew in her welcomed path!
Dismal it was in the garden plot,
Where the Spring's mild rule had been forgot—
Where the mouldering weed held loathsome reign,

And sighed, in cracked and discordant strain,
To the cooing breeze the golden song
He had heard the summer buds among.
And dismal it was upon the hill
Where the water's clank was never still—
For the bursting heart of the little rill,
Held in the ice's pitiless hand
And tightly bound in its silver band,
Was throbbing to kiss the foot of Spring,
And greet her with songs he loves to sing!
Dismal it was on the barren slope,
Where the earth's brown hand was once more ope
For the ring which her Doge, the burning sun,
Drops her great eager palm upon—
A glorious ring of dazzling flowers
Gilt by the sunbeams—jewelled by showers.
No bud had brightened the hill-side yet,
But the sweet meek face of the violet—
Calmy she raised her mild blue eye,
And gazed unmoved on the frowning sky:

Emblem of Faith! she scented afar
The breezes that drew the Spring's light car!

The cold March wind arose in his might,
And swept through the silent streets of night,
And scaled the heights of her cloud-wrapt wall,
Sounding the Winter's dying call.

Fierce waged the battle—with shriek and cry
Clamored the wild wind through the sky,
And dashed his legions against the host
Of night in numberless numbers lost!

Earth groaned in her motherly heart to see
A struggle that waged so pitilessly.

But the orbs were thinking of higher themes,
And dreamed in their couch of blue sweet dreams
Of saintly souls that were coming to dwell
In the light of each heavenly citadel:
Night with a jealous hand had spread
A curtain of clouds about their bed
To hide from her darling's sight the scene,

And softly they slept in slumber serene.
Grimly they towered above the fray,
Crimea's mountain-tops, gaunt and grey:
They caught in their hollow hearts the tone
Of the panting whirlwind's passionate moan,
And laughed "Ha! ha!" in their breast of stone!
But meekly they raised their snowy head,
To watch the shining heralds that sped,
Bearing with joy through the gladdened air
The incense pure of the soldier's prayer!
And there in the voiceless streets of space,
Borne with the comet's breathless pace
And footstep of flame, they saw afar
The wingéd steeds and the fiery car!
'Twas coming for him who in rest serene
On the brow of the deep and dark ravine,
In dreams through the haunts of his far home roved,
And looked on the faces that most he loved.
His wearied men lay sleeping around,
Pillowed upon the comfortless ground—
Each shedding his blood, in dreams of strife,

To quicken his leader's precious life.
Dream on, O soldier! O'er thy soul, in air,
Poised like an angel stands the trustful prayer—
And, sentinels, beside thy stony couch
Two hundred valiant hearts of heroes crouch.

It is the wild-flower blooming on the rich old Eng-
lish sward,
Spring's first bright jewel wedded to its fingers brown
and hard :
It grows within the valley, 'tis the first dear place it
greeted,
Where breeze and brook are battling for the guerdon
of its sweets.
Here, in the smiling summer, many dreary years ago,
The bright buds hung their jealous heads at child-
hood's ruddier glow,
And little bare feet dimpled the stream's pale sober
cheek,
And made it from its quiet heart a silvery welcome
speak.

Its theme is now the curling smoke that rises o'er
the wood,

Where the home that held and loved thee in thy
merry childhood stood :

Sometimes we hear a murmur from its little patient
heart,

Mingling with its sweetest songs as an echo-chorus,
start—

But we would not breathe the thought, nor trespass
on the dream

That perchance, long years ago, woo'd the coy ro-
mantic stream.

Now through the valley passing by each well-remem-
bered tree,

That in boyhood was a playmate, and will yet a
mourner be—

Still thy hospitable home is opening wide its door,
And wears the self-same greeting that in olden times
it bore :

And flitting up and down the lawn are ghosts of
days gone by,

Poor sprites ! that now are dancing to the music of
a sigh !

Up the cold stone wall it clambers with fingers red
and torn,

Clinging to the rugged rocks that its close embraces
scorn,

A little vine so slender that the summer-sprite would
fear

To move it with a murmur, or to bow it with a tear.

It has clambered to the window of the little room
above,

From which thy infant footsteps first world-ward
learned to rove ;

And one blue eye has opened, on this strange and
jarring earth,

Whose sweetest sight was present to greet it at its
birth.

Perhaps some shining minister of that fair train who
bring

Their garnered scents and beauties to grace the throne
of Spring—

Reading in her rapid flight the tale of love forgot,
Stopped lingering a moment to weep its lonely lot,
And gave that its first blossom should view the holiest sight

With which this harsh and heedless world could its
pure heart delight.

Ay—it is thy mother praying—praying for thee, warrior brave;

Praying, though her thoughts are kneeling by the
stillness of thy grave!

She has ceased to hope that here her son will to her
arms be given,

But she prays that she may meet him in the holiness
of Heaven.

Now, patter, patter, patter, on her dry and parching
heart

Fall the healing drops of comfort from the clouds of
God that start—

And forth the blossoms twinkle pure as lilies of the
vale

That are the silver footprints in the April shower's
trail.

Fear not to weep, O soldier!—an angel standeth near
To string in diamond coronet each pure and manly
tear!

An hour—and they will jewel the circle of thy head,
For crowned with tears a mortal only to his King is
led.

They are sitting in the room where the thoughts of
dead men stand

As mummies swathed and lettered by the skilled em-
balmer's hand.

A brand is slowly dying on the ample old hearth-
stone—

Like hopes they flicker up and die, the lithe sparks,
one by one:

The sun and fire have entered the field of deadly
strife,

And one bright beam is seeking the failing ember's
life.

Fair as summer and the noon (when clustering roses
throw

The shadow of their fragrance on the air's too lovely
glow—

When June in silent thankfulness is stretching out to
God

Her leafy hands, a-tremble at the breezes' wayward
nod)—

Are those two gentle faces that watch the dying brand
In the purer rays of sunshine poured from God's all-
blessing hand.

In the silence of their thoughts they sit and watch
with dreamy eye

The future's fairy phantoms pass lingeringly by ;
And one has built within her heart a holy shrine to
Hope—

But hers to Love's twin cherubim for evermore is ope.
One is dreaming of the day when earth's brown cheek
will blush

With deeply-erimsoned roses and the bud's more ten-
der flush ;

And on the fields' deep bosom will gently be unrolled
The wavy grain as dazzling as an angel's tress of gold ;
When her king will sing his anthem of sunshine to
the earth,

And waken her from dreary sleep to summer scenes
of mirth—

Until her full heart heaves and swells to join the
golden strain

In choruses of leaf and flower from breeze-enamored
plain :

For then a brother's tender love will lend the sum-
mer bloom,

And throw fresh fragrance o'er the hills and daisied
meads of Home.

But she, the dearer of the twain—what happy visions
guard

Her speechless lips, and o'er her voice keep long and
silent ward ?

Her fond thought, hand in hand with love, adown the
woodland flees,

To the little church whose ivied brow peeps through
the naked trees :

'Tis summer, and the fond earth tells before her lord,
the sun,

The rosary of flowers he clasped her beauteous breast
upon ;

The bells are ringing sweetly out upon the listening
air,

Whose zephyrs swift its music to the glades and
mountains bear—

And underneath this arch of chime, and o'er the
velvet grass,

Up through the massive oaken door, a little party
pass—

Hist ! hist ! The mountain sprite
Scares the dull and drowsy night

With his cries ;

Or it is the step of friends

Whom our kindly ally sends

To surprise.

Look! look! 'Tis but the shadow

Of a dark cloud creeping slow

O'er the ground—

And the rivulet is sobbing,

And the wind's great heart is throbbing

To its sound.

Then a clear sharp whisper ran

Through the heart of every man,

'Tis the foe!

Down—down upon your faces,

Like shadows in your places,

Crouching low!

As a wrathful fire that sweeps

Through the forest, as it sleeps

Hushed in night,

Surging o'er the broken wall

Of the myriad trees that fall

By its might,

Reaches now a little stream

Whose defiant waters gleam

In its path,
And oppose a glancing front
To the fierce and burning brunt
Of its wrath!
Here in vain it lifts on high,
Through the red and frowning sky,
Arms of fire—
Crushed and mouldering on the hearth
Of the cold and dreary earth,
They expire!
So, with the tread of flame,
The wary foeman came
In his might:
A stealthy serpent creeping
On his wearied prey and sleeping--
Grand the sight!
Ha, his fangs! See—see them glance—
Bayonet and thirsty lance—
And his burning eyeballs dance
With delight.

Is it the stealthy tramp of foes?
Or warrior hearts in burning throes
 For the field of strife?
Like lurking lions they crouch and bide
The word that shall pour the crimson tide
 Of the foeman's life.

Now, Christian soldier, gird thine armor on!
 Clothed in the panoply of prayer
Against the spirits of the air—
 Trusting thy God will aid
 The right with thy true blade—
Be here on earth thy final victory won.

They come—no sound of life is heard!
 Till as a bolt at noonday hurled
 Upon the still and drowsy world,
Shrieks through the air the signal word—
 And two hundred men
 Echo it again—
“Up, 97th!” Onward they charge

Adown the steep and slippery gorge,
Across the separating span,
And HEDLEY VICARS leads the van!

It was a glorious sight, to see
Two hundred warriors valiantly
Against two thousand foemen dare
Their few but trusty blades to bare :
It would have nerved the coward's hand
To see their leader's fearless front,
Bearing himself the battle's brunt,
And leading on his little band.
Oh soul, how short is Time
To hymn the deed sublime !

Now, bursting from the clouds of Heaven,
The moonbeams play
About the red path he has riven ;
And once again the cry is given,
“ Follow ” — “ This way ! ”
A shot—he falls ! But circling round,

His gallant men dispute the ground,

And bear him from the fray.

They bear him gently in their loving arms,

Rough men whose heart the gory contest charms—

And wash his death-wound with the tender tear,

Stout men who have not wept for many a year:

And softly Night with darkened wings

About their backward pathway clings,

To shield them from the foe's gaze

And hide the battle's blinding blaze.

As slowly back their steps they trace

With hearts that echo to their pace,

Bright grows the world's eclipse—

“Cover—oh, cover up my face!”

Comes faintly from his lips—

And rough hands softly shroud the eye

That cannot bide Heaven's brilliancy.

Oh! not the splendors of the moonlight sky,

From whose array the cloudy armies fly—

Nor those fair orbs who in their clustered might
Put the weak phantoms of the earth to flight—

Are burning on his sight !

See ! O'er infinity's still depths they lie

With steps that whiten on the blue profound,

And soft descending by each starry round

Link heaven and earth, and bridge the yawning sky—

An angel company !

They come with hymn

And harp of cherubim,

To welcome to the pure repose of heaven

The victor-soul to whom the crown is given.

* * * * *

Resplendent stars, in purple meadow trembling ;

Leaves of the great Heaven tree—

Or countless spears of angel host assembling

Throughout infinity—

Why droop ye each your sadly shining leaf,

And trail your spears in silent, sullen grief,

And twinkle tearfully ?

Over the sick man's midnight room advancing,
Our eyes grew great with grief,
On the pale face of brave old Raglan glancing,
Britannia's noble chief:

See Justice limping with a tardy wreath,
To grace the brow, alas! grown cold in death,
With Time's frail, fading leaf!

Lingering star, to Night's pale brow still clinging,
While hastes the rosy day,
As tear from cheek of sorrow slowly winging
Before Love's sunny ray—
Hast thou some message still to man to give,
Some memory in earth's great heart to live,
Some radiant, star-like lay?

I caught the echo of a song when straying
By Alma's bloody vale—
And every breeze o'er field of battle playing
Repeats the glorious tale:
List! while before the sunbeams' step of flame

My dew-drop beauty fades, I hymn the name
Of FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

Blessings on thee, Angel!
Woman thou art not—
Sent as an Evangel
To this lowly spot,
To preach to man the golden strain well-nigh forgot!

On the battle's midnight
Rising like a star
Crowned with heavenly light,
At thy sight afar
To prayers and blessings turn the horrid cries of war.

As the feet of April
On the sunny slope
Sky and earth with beauty fill,
Cups of fragrance ope,
So up beneath thy feet spring life and love and
hope.

As a ray of sunlight,
Stealing through the wood,
Glances on a flower bright
In the solitude,

Thy genial love finds buds in hearts however rude.

Up with gentle motion,
Rising one by one,
As the waves of ocean
Smile back to the sun,
So by thy passing beam bright looks and smiles are
won.

At the step of morning
Birds their notes prolong,
Her fair brows adorning
With a crown of song—
And round thy coming step the thankful voices throng.

“Tell me, wounded comrade,
Is it angel’s form

In a mortal's mien clad,
Winging through this storm
Of hissing hail and clashing clouds where death shot
swarm?

“Is she friend, or mother,
Searching through the dead
For her loved? Or other
Dearer still is fled?
Sure such a flood of love on kin alone were shed.

“Battle's storm-clouds looming
On the field of strife—
With the thunder's booming
Peals with death-glance rife—
Melt into sunset sheen and gild departing life.”

Floods of fragrance flinging
Through the house of death,
With a prayer winging

Home the parting breath,
To thee the dying men their last fond words be-
queath.

Star of even shining
On the brow of night,
With the day's declining
Glows with fairer light—
So in hope's twilight grow thy look and words more
bright.

Silver-footed shower
On the thirsty plain
Paints the pallid flower,
Gilds the summer grain,
And makes the barren heath with beauty flush again.

So eyes with gladness dance,
Ears fresh music hear,
Caught from thy kindly glance,

Word and frequent tear—
E'en on the fallen oak some shoots of life appear.

Little brook is gliding
Through the forest dim,
It the leaves are hiding,
Yet its ceaseless hymn
From hill-sides wakes an echo, and from mountains
grim!

Still its waves are catching
Little shreds of gold,
It the sun is patching
With hues manifold,
Till the breeze bends the oak its beauty to behold.

Its little heart is full,
Full of warmth and love,
Thus thy footsteps beautiful
Through our life-fields rove,
And earth is bent to praise by echoes from above.

Saint, or woman, thou!

Throughout every land

With thy heart endow

All thy sister band—

And circle all the earth with thy love's golden strand!

III.



I.

Is it the moan of the northern wind
Through the hearts of trees,
The tremulous trees;
Or the pleading plaint of the wounded hind,
That faints on the breeze?

II.

Is it the swan's last, death-saddened song
That sounds in our ears,
Our yearning ears;
Or the stifled sob o'er a maiden's wrong,
This fount of tears?

III.

Is it the dirge the sad sea sings,
The querulous sea,
Old white-haired sea;

Or the bursting heart the torrent flings
Down recklessly ?

IV.

Is it the mother's heart-broken cry
O'er her only child,
Her pale, dead child ;
Or the breeze of Autumn gone sighing by
Where flowers once smiled ?

V.

Is it the wail of a spirit lost,
So startlingly sad,
Sounding so sad ;
Or the midnight shriek of unburied ghost,
Sorrow gone mad ?

VI.

Is it an archangel's warning sword
That cleaveth the air,
The frightened air ;
Or deathful breath of the wrath of the Lord,
Waking despair ?

Lo ! through the murky sky the sword upraised !
At whose fell sight the sun grows dim and mazed ;
The air all mute ; the breeze crept far away :
And night o'ertakes the scared fast-fleeing day !
Dark pestilential mists o'erhang like palls,
Up the blue slope the plague's dank shadow crawls,
And where Heaven's star-gemmed palm above them
spanned,
Disease spreads over all her hollow hand !
One deep, deep sob from choking breasts that starts—
One lengthened wail of thousand breaking hearts !
In sackcloth bowed beside her children's bed,
Old Norfolk anguished bends her widowed head,
Or sadly wanders by their myriad graves,
Nor comfort takes, nor consolation craves.
Cradled in earth her children calmly sleep,
Their burial chanted by the passing deep ;
She cannot wake them with her luring charms,
They've found, and love their earlier mother's arms.
O Norfolk, weep ! In sorrow shroud thy face !
Gone is thy beauty ; fled thy olden grace !

Stricken of God, a leper henceforth go,
Thy form in sackcloth clad, thy heart in woe!
Night has set on thee—dark, Egyptian night,
Starless and hopeless, with no morrow bright—
From house to house the messenger is fled—
No hearth-stone now that numbers not its dead!
Hear ye his pinions sweep? Behold, he's come,
And 'neath his wings spreads universal gloom!

But rose no star upon this fearful night?
No bright'ning beam—nor any ray of light?
Did worldly barriers stand unmoved before
The tide of grief that swept that fated shore?
Did Mammon lift his glittering load on high
And, Mercy spurned, his blood-bound kindred fly?
Did dove-eyed Charity, her cheek grown pale
While Love and Fear, in turn, her heart assail,
Lift up her eyes to man then all in vain,
And only words, not deeds, of good-will gain?
Did Pity kneel alone by new-made grave,
And stretch no hand the stricken life to save?

Or hand of earth spurn aught that Love had tasked,
Or heart of man refuse what Mercy asked?
Speak, Norfolk, from the path beside each mound
That then the kindly step of stranger owned—
Not strangers they—a dearer name they earned,
A brother's love then in their true hearts burned!
Swift as they saw the Pest's foul pinions spread,
A brother host to smitten Norfolk sped—
Left life behind and came to watch with death,
Where food was plague, and pestilence was breath!
No North, no South, nor East, nor West were known;
A common sorrow made their heart but one!
Then Northern hand, rough from the heavy plough,
Soft as an infant's soothed the Southern brow;
And Western palm, inured to rifle's grasp,
Eased the soul's parting with its friendly clasp;
The Woodsman, when the struggling breath had fled,
Read solemn words above the highborn dead,
And dropped a tear—the only mourner he,
To honor thus a stranger's memory.

Nor strangers only in these good deeds shared :
Stout-hearted sons of that old city dared ·
The certain grave that gaped on either side,
And stayed, and strove, and sickened, sank and died.

O Love, that tempered this his fearful frown !
When fell the harvest by Death's sickle strewn,
God's angel followed in the reaper's path
To quench the terrors of his Master's wrath,
And garnered from the desolated plain
Rich golden sheaves of ever-blooming grain.
How shall I speak thy praise, O saintly man,
Soldier of Christ, fall'n fighting in the van !
The Cross in hand, where'er Death's shadow fell
Thy soothing tones the darkness would dispel ;
The sick aroused to hear thy cheering voice,
And dying faces shone with new-learned joys ;
The weak were strengthened by thy joyous tone,
The strong man wept, and then went stronger on.
Thy priestly robes waved o'er the coffined dead,
Thy snow-white vestments shone by dying bed,

To bless their rest, or cheer the mourner's heart,
Or bid the soul in joyful hope depart.
But there was discord in one angel song—
One face was wanting in the heavenly throng—
Too pure for earth where he was lent, not given,
Lamented CHISHOLM sought his home in Heaven.

O Whirlwind, holding awful revelry,
Spare from thy deathful blast that noble tree!
O Fire, whose footstep is a blackened path,
Spare but one blossom from thy burning wrath!
Vain, vain—the blow has fallen—our hopes are fled—
And JACKSON's name is numbered with the dead!
He, toiling, patient, day on weary day,
Drooped not nor fainted on his lonely way,
But when the summons came he laid him down
And died a warrior, with his armor on!
Only death's grasp his generous arm could hold—
Only in death his noble heart grew cold.
As in some old Cathedral's stately aisle,
The colored shadows of the sunlight smile

On marble face, which, though earth-born it be,
Hath won from stone an immortality—
So 'round his form, in death grown marble-pale,
Love heavenly-hued enwrapped its sunny veil,
Streaming through broken hearts, and still
Around his grave its golden shadows trill!

Woman, forgive! if trembling I essay
To hymn your praises in my humble lay;
Timid, I shrank the task till sober Truth
Came bounding forth to help my shrinking youth—
For only half of Truth's fair face were seen
Should Woman's name and deeds no mention win!
Hark! as I sing, from Norfolk's hearths and graves,
Blent with the heaving bass of Ocean's waves,
A strain arising soft, and sweet, and clear,
Enters the heart through the enchanted ear:
So in the wondrous tale of Eastern lore,
The magic word spreads wide the hidden door.
Oh, could I grasp that sweetly varied strain,
Earth's giant heart should thrill with joyous pain!

Alas ! its echo floats above my pen,
And I can only echo that again.

Toll, bell ! the funeral bell !
 Life's little day
 Has passed away !
Ring out a solemn knell !
 A score of years,
 Linked smiles and tears,
Are measured by thy strong remorseless swell !

Toll, bell ! the funeral bell !
 A form of clay
 Has passed away !
Ring out a solemn knell !
 How, young and fair
 Beyond compare,
 Her life was given
 To point to Heaven—
Tell out, tell out with thy remorseless swell !

Toll, bell! the funeral bell!

Another soul

Has reached its goal!

Ring out a solemn knell!

Hark the loud song

The saints among!

Tell out a sinner saved with thy remorseless swell!

Toll, bell! the funeral bell!

Thou canst not dim

The angel hymn!

Yet ring a solemn knell!

Her sin's foul spot

Has been forgot:

Oh, to her home

The wanderer's come!

A triumph now is your remorseless swell!

Toll, bell! the funeral bell!

Falls the full tear

On a bride's bier!

Ring out a solemn knell !

His tears in vain

Appeal to Heaven :

Tell out his grief with thy remorseless swell !

Toll, bell ! the funeral bell !

A blooming prey

Death bears away !

Ring out a solemn knell !

Dry, dry his tears :

Life's ceaseless fears

And bitter woe

She'll never know !

Tell out her joy in thy remorseless swell !

Toll, bell ! the funeral bell !

A mother's breast

Has welcomed rest !

Ring out a solemn knell !

Well done ! well done !

Sweet, patient one !

Welcome her home with thy remorseless swell !

Toll, bell ! the funeral bell !

Dust to its sod !

Soul to its God !

Ring out a solemn knell !

Well done thy part,

Thou noble heart !

Ring out, I crave,

“A Woman’s Grave”

Over her rest with thy remorseless swell !

Echo, bell ! echo, bell !

Above their lowly tomb,

For centuries to come !

Echo thy solemn knell !

Oh tell of Woman’s faith

That trod in Duty’s path—

Oh tell of Woman’s love,

These clustered graves that prove !

And echo this with thy remorseless swell !

He who was foremost in old Norfolk's pride!
Noblest of noble sons, most fit to guide
A people's helm in every hour of need—
True to his God, and to his heart's proud creed,
When stout men paled, and cowards fled appalled,
A chosen band of heroes 'round him called,
And calmly faced the coming death, nor knew
What 'twas to fear, or be in thought untrue.
There was his post; his was the present hour;
In God's great hand lay all the Future's power;
His was to do; his daily life to bear;
His life was God's, his honor his own care:
God took the soul by deed well tried on earth—
In death his honor proved its lofty birth.

To die in battle is a death sublime!
But when the faint hand of expiring Time
Shall drop forever from its trembling hold
The scroll with all its hero-names enrolled—
Eternity from Earth's devouring flames
Shall snatch her glowing catalogue of names,

And where the falling stars withhold their rays,
These deathless names shall shine to endless days;
There splendid as the spheres his fame shall be,
Who died a martyr to Humanity!
So long as Honor lives unstained on Earth;
So long as Christians know a martyr's worth;
So long as name unspotted is a crown;
So long as men a God, or soul, shall own;—
Thy name shall live, and loved and honored be,
O martyred Woods, in Earth's memory!

And thou, Virginia! 'round thy heart entwined,
That hero host forever keep enshrined—
Strangers and sons alike thy love now claim,
Their cause was one, their life, their death, their fame.
Ye mountains, write the tale deep in your hearts!
Thou sea, proclaim it to the distant marts!
And wind! that sleepest now on their loved tomb—
Whene'er thou wanderest by Virginian home,
Tell of the sainted dead, and make their name
To giant deeds each brave man's heart inflame:

And if perchance at twilight's thoughtful tide,
Some pilgrim stranger stand those mounds beside,
And ask the deeds of nameless dead beneath,
Thy loving tribute to their memory breathe.
Tell of the horror at the plague's first stride—
Tell of the faith that still on God relied—
Tell of the woe that wept in every home—
The noisome dead uncoffined—and the gloom
Outpoured upon them, till the living fled
Each other's sight more corpse-like than the dead!
Tell of the hours of ceaseless toil—the love
That at the bedside still with sickness strove—
The wasted frame—the body racked with pain—
The blackened tongue that strove to thank—in vain—
The soul that shrank not at the step of death—
The glazing eye—the last, calm, peaceful breath;—
Tell of the trench in which his corpse was thrown—
Tell of the martyr's bright, eternal crown!

EPILOGUE.

OH, say not that the martyr spirit's dead !
Or that the hero heart
Will e'er from earth depart ;
Or we shall ever weep true manhood fled !

The oak's red heart is throbbing through his leaves,
As in the ages gone ;
And still with mournful moan,
The Autumn wind through the bare branches grieves !

Yet every Summer brings a crown of green
To grace his brave old head—
Him, left by winter dead,
Spring loves to deck in youth's perpetual sheen.

The world's ripe fruit drops in its open grave,
Touched by a wintry hand :
True hearts of every land,
The strength and glory that the Summer gave,

These never die—but in an endless chain,
As star-zone of the sky
At day's step seems to die,
In fresher beauty they are born again.

The white-winged snow would pall the wearied eye,
Weighing on earth's great heart,
If never to depart—
Its beauty in satiety would hidden lie :

April would cease to move us by her tears,
Nor could her sunny smile
The wayward heart beguile,
If she swayed earth through never-ending years :

Summer, far scattering her wealth of gold,
 Would e'en a tyrant be,
 If she unchangingly
The seasons in her gilded chain should hold :

Autumn, bent low o'er earth his loved to shield
 From winter's frozen glance—
 Pierced by his icy lance,
His red life shedding over hill and field,

And staining tree and flower with its rich flood—
 Would far more cruel seem
 Than any fleeting dream
That ever mourner's sobbing slumber wooed :

Or than the gleams of Paradise that glance
 Upon the traveller's eye,
 Born of the desert sky
Only to break the heart they would entrance.

Man is the fitting index of his age :

Some for great deeds are born,

The earth's life to adorn,

The world their own—they the world's heritage :

Each in his proper sphere moves on through earth ;

We keep our lowly path,

Waiting in humble faith

Until some age shall give a giant birth :

This is the lesson from all nature learned—

Still, in her snowy shroud,

Old mother earth lay bowed,

While seeds of beauty in her bosom burned,

Until the mandate came for Summer's reign,

And then her voice upraised

Her mighty Maker praised,

In golden notes that quivered o'er the plain !

A lily lapped in fragrant Summer airs,
Like a seraphic wing
Around which sunbeams cling,
And floods of heavenly songs that earthward bears,

Would seem, upon the pale, still breast of snows,
To mock the pallid dearth
Stalking the streets of earth,
The summer-ghost that shrinking winter knows :

Not all are born on earth for giant deeds ;
Each has his work to do,
His fixed path to pursue,
To play his part where'er his life-road leads :

Yet, in a lowly sphere each manly heart,
If to himself but true—
Though he alone will view
The toils that cloud —the unseen foes that start

About his path, and darken it with strife—
Sure will he victor be,
And conquering gloriously,
Splendent will be the evening of his life!

As much a hero he who boldly meets
The lesser ills of earth—
Though we but know his worth
In the bright sunset that his life completes.

So o'er the death-couch of the clouded day,
To the upgazing world
New beauties are unfurled,
Draping the pale sky with their rich array—

And glittering through the bright empurpled arch,
The sun rolls on in pride—
The grey clouds cannot hide
His eye of fire, or longer stay his march!

The high-browed peak, crowned by the sunset's gold,
More stately seems, and grand,
Beside the lowlier band
That lift their heads in wonder to behold :

The grim tree takes a grandeur from the flower ;
One mighty in the earth,
Humble the other's birth,
A poet singing through his sunny hour—

Yet loving eyes will bend to mark the blush
That tints the blossom's cheek—
And wayward ears to seek
The fragrant songs that from its full heart gush :

And mayhap some will think this humble need
More worthy of the soul
And of its heavenly goal,
And the pure teachings of its lofty creed.

World-greatness is true manhood sealed by Fame ;
 When lulled in arms of peace,
 All sounds of discord cease,
And sleep steals soft upon earth's giant frame,

Though all things seem in silent slumber lapped,
 Yet there is unseen seed,
 Parent of mighty deed,
Offspring of Time, in Earth's wide womb enwrapped.

What though the mount's black brow has hoary grown,
 Its deep mouth sealed with ice ?
 Beneath the fierce fires hiss,
And tones unearthly through its caverns moan.

Far down beneath the waves a coral isle,
 By hands unseen bedight,
 Slow rises to the light,
And parts the waters with a rosy smile !

World-greatness needs the gaudy seal of Fame—

When its full time has come

It bursts its prison womb,

And nations wondering its birth proclaim :

As when above the bosom brown of earth

The babe-flower lifts its head,

Then joyful sunbeams spread

Their frolic ring about and dance of mirth ;

The air is near to lull it with soft breeze,

And bear its stolen sweets

To the dell's deep retreats,

And shout a triumph through the bending trees !

The dew sits janitor upon its leaves

Throughout the starry night,

To guard from wicked sprite,

Or list the whispered plot the tempest weaves !

The sunlight paints it with its richest tints,
And with a brush of gold
Makes its pale cheek unfold
Each day new beauties that its touch imprints!

The silver-sandalled shower speeds sobbing by,
Kisses its tender face,
And rains a gentler grace—
Alas! it weepeth that the flower must die!

So Heaven first greets the new-born hero's sight—
Then sunny eyes of earth
Dance at his glorious birth,
And circle 'round him as a crown of light:

And deep-voiced Fame is there to catch his deeds,
And spread them through the world—
Her mighty wings unfurled,
Waking a tempest throughout earth she speeds!

Then myriad hearts catch up the swelling gale,
 And myriad souls are glad,
 And myriad voices add
To the wild storms the hero's course that hail!

Thus with the mortal whom the world calls great—
 But there are god-like deeds
 The worldling never heeds,
Nor less their worth that humble is their fate—

Whose star (not ruddy as the martial Mars,
 Sending his lurid beams
 Far through the realm of dreams,
And waking watchful worlds to thought of wars)—

Rises in light serene above the vale,
 And hangs, a guardian sprite
 That smiles at black-browed Night,
And breaks with silver spear the clouds that scale

The azure rampart of the slumbering skies :
 As sheenest jewel fair,
 Pure as an angel's prayer,
Only before the sunlight's flame it flies !

Day must succeed to Night—(poor, love-lorn Night,
 Who, following patient, waits
 At Day's rich, golden gates,
Jewelled, to heighten more her piteous plight !)

Each must have equal sway : but some great heart
 At Day's proud step will thrill ;
 An humbler soul will trill
The songs that round the steps of Even start.

Under each sway content—with equal love—
 Whether the yielding air
 A gold-throned monarch bear,
Awed by the glories that about him move :

Or if a silver sceptre sway the spheres,
And charm, with tender ray,
From Day's wild reign away—
Still must our praises triumph o'er our fears.

Oh! when a hand of cloud encircles earth,
And dims the sparkling stream,
And makes the dank hills seem
Forever to have hushed their songs of mirth—

Doubt not the sun is shining overhead!
Bursting the cloudy gate,
What splendors on him wait,
And over earth what floods of glory spread!

O BROTHER! speed the noble cause of Man!
 Make thine own heart a star,
 Sending its radiance far,
Till Love completes the work that Love began!

Dream not of glories of the days of yore—
 Not all the day is sped,
 Thy sun gleams overhead
In the bright hollow of the Evermore!

Oh! when Time's gewgaw sun has shrivelled up;
 The ghastly moon has fled
 Unto the ever dead,
And with her drawn her tinsel silver group;

And when this cloudy curtain of the air
 That angel hands now hold,
 Shall be at last uprolled,
And the great theatre beyond laid bare——

Rash pen, forbear the Future's wealth to seek!

Let no divining rod

Turn towards the throne of God:

This—only this—is given thee to speak:

Its starlight will be actions great and good,

Catching their holy glow,

(As sunbeams star-ward flow,)

From the Eternal Sun—our Mighty God!

NOTES.

It is not, at this time, necessary to note particularly deeds that have become household words. With the names of Franklin and Kane, and the princely merchants their co-laborers ; with the heroes and heroines of the Crimea ; with the gentle story of Lady Franklin, and Florence Nightingale, and Hedley Vicars, all who will read this little book are familiar. No one will be surprised to meet them in this song.

But there are others, no less worthy of mention, who, in this wild frenzy of American life, may be forgotten, if they have not already passed out of the memory of the multitude. I speak of our own HEROES—those especially our own ; not in the spirit of boasting which is our national failing, but in the faith of the oneness of man. Our boast is not in vain, when we speak of Chisholm, and Jackson, and Woodis—of true men and noble-hearted women who encountered an atmosphere more deadly than the frozen air of the North, and a foe more wily and dangerous than the Russian.

In alluding to Norfolk, the Author has included under the term, all that part of Virginia that was desolated by the pestilence of 1855 ; and in speaking of its men and women, he has but set to homely music that which was read in every paper in the land.

The Hunter Woodis of whom the Poem speaks, was mayor of the city of Norfolk. Of him it is enough to say, that in the prime of life, aged but 35 years, he elected to remain at the post of duty, and die if God so willed.

The Rev. Messrs. Jackson and Chisholm were rectors of churches at Norfolk and Portsmouth, respectively. They were men of pure and unspotted lives ; “ full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ;” strict in living up to the solemn vows of their office ; devoted to the Church, and to its Head, their Master ; and, therefore, men not afraid to die. I have

heard them spoken of with that grateful reverence that rests upon the memory of a "good man," as sunshine on a grave.

In this connection, a few extracts from the letters of Mr. Chisholm (Memoir, New York, 1856), with reference to the extent and horrors of the plague, are not out of place; to show, by contrast, the heroism of these soldiers of the Cross, who, when all of their own congregation were dead or had fled, remained to meet their death when ministering to strangers.

"The state of things in Norfolk is said to be appalling beyond all conception. The Baltimore steamer came into port to-day, to land, among other articles, a lot of fifty coffins; and we are told that such was the dire need of them, that there was actual quarrelling and fighting over them." "The condition of our town (Portsmouth) is awful beyond conception. The eye must see; the ear must hear; the fancy cannot furnish the deep, dark shadows of the picture. On Sunday, thirty-two deaths; on Monday, twenty-two—to-day, by eleven o'clock, seventeen. The heartless language of the undertaker from whom I obtained this morning's report, was, almost in a tone of exultation: 'Oh! we'll get it up to twenty before sunset.' " "Never since the continent of America has been settled (I speak calmly, and with reference to what I have read or heard of), never has so terrible a calamity overwhelmed the same amount of population."

To this general statement, I append three notes, explanatory of the only places that seem to require special notice.

Page 19; lines 5 and 6.

"Than him, ne'er mother wept a nobler son,
Or gained so soon, in thee, as dear an one."

This was written *before* the death of Dr. Kane. It needs a master-spirit to dare take up the song now.

Page 84; line 10.

"But her's to Love's twin cherubim," &c.

Lest in this singular age this expression be misunderstood, let me state that it is of earthly affection combined with, and purified by, a holier love, that this speaks. The "Life of Hedley Vears" bears out the truth of the line.

Page 112 ; line 12.

“ Her sin’s foul spot
Has been forgot.”

Let it be written here, to the praise of woman, true to her nature even in degradation, that many of the outcasts of Norfolk were found the most unselfish attendants on the dying ; bathing their feet with their tears, and wiping them with the hairs of their head, if that by any means they might find in the sick and friendless, Him whom we “ have always ” with us.

I have seen few nobler pictures in the gallery of life. It gives new meaning to the admonition, “ He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone.”

With this, the Author bids his little song God-speed. To our common humanity the appeal has been made ; and if he has touched a living chord, it is of itself a sufficient reward. If this little song shall have put an end to some of the croakings of those who are ever prating of the glories of the past, and shall have taught them that the earth has not yet ceased bearing heroes ; if it open to the eyes of the men and women of to-day, the fields of heroism lying about them on every side ; if it show the young clergyman of our own times the beauty of that devotion to God’s service even unto death, that finds not its expression in the proclaiming of new and startling human conceits, nor its reward in the noisy applause of men ; if it impress on one who reads it, the moral grandeur of DUTY PERFORMED, its end will be answered.

THE END.

1875

